

Coping after Disasters

Everyone in Harris County was affected by Hurricane Harvey to some degree. Harris County Public Health encourages residents to recognize trauma and find support.



Emotional and physical responses to disasters:

- Anxiety or fear
- Overwhelmed by sadness or anger
- Guilty, even if you had no control over events
- Heroic, like you can do anything
- Too much energy or no energy at all
- Disconnected or numb, unable to care or feel
- Impatient with ordinary problems
- Stomachaches or diarrhea
- Headaches or other pains for no clear reason
- Eating too much or too little
- Sweating or having chills
- Tremors or muscle twitches
- Being jumpy or easily startled
- Isolating, wanting to be alone more than usual
- Having trouble sleeping
- Having difficulty making decisions



Who can we call?

United Way 2-1-1

CALL: 2-1-1 or 713-957-4357

Web: <http://referral.unitedwayhouston.org/>
Staffed 24/7 by navigators who connect us to resources for basic needs and distress support. Multi-lingual.

SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline

CALL: 1-800-985-5990

TEXT: "TalkWithUs" to 66746

Web: <http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>

Staffed 24/7 by counselors to help us cope and manage stress. Multi-lingual.



What can we do?

- Be patient with yourself and others
- Talk with others (neighbors, faith leaders, etc.)
- Take deep breaths
- Listen to music
- Pay attention to your physical stress
- Avoid caffeine, tobacco, and alcohol
- Use known coping skills, such as what has helped in past traumatic events
- Get back into your routine, or make a new routine
- Know that distressing feelings about a disaster usually fade over time (2-4 weeks after the event)



Who needs extra care?

Anyone may have trauma symptoms after witnessing community tragedy. People who lost homes or loved ones may feel grief as well.

First-responders can struggle to return to "normal life" after disasters. They will need time to themselves. Responders may be irritable as they adjust out of "rescue mode." Some may need professional help to process what they saw. Symptoms that need treatment are long-term anxiety or sadness, violent outbursts, heavy drinking or drug use, or memory loss.

Children will be affected by a disaster, even if their family was not displaced. Symptoms include acting out, not sleeping well, clinginess, fears, stomachaches, and headaches. Seek professional help if the child has ongoing anxiety, nightmares, or refuses to leave the home. Children are aware of their parents' worries. It can help for parents to admit their concerns to their children and talk about coping and moving forward.

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